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RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY 0036  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 5198  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0532  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0115  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1164  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY 0131  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0328  
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 0123  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0844  
RUEHNN/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 1149  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6020  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0188  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MADRID 000950

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY FM LEON ON KOSOVO, IRAQ, IRAN/VENEZUELA,  
WESTERN SAHARA, RUSSIA

REF: A. STATE 64975

[1](#)B. STATE 61378

[1](#)C. STATE 57275

[1](#)D. STATE 59249

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Hugo Llorens; reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Charge met with MFA Secretary of State Bernardino Leon on May 17 at the Charge's residence. Leon said Spain was looking forward to the visit of Secretary Rice and said that there was concern that the visit not be manipulated by "either side" of the Spanish political spectrum. Charge thanked Leon for Spain's recent \$28 million contribution to Iraqi reconstruction; Leon reconfirmed Spain's commitment to the International Compact with Iraq. On Kosovo, Leon reiterated Spain's commitment to the EU position on Kosovo, but also the position that Spain could not likely keep forces in Kosovo if there was not a UNSC resolution supporting the Ahtissari Plan and Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in the absence of such a resolution, citing implications for Spain's own problems with national minorities. Charge relayed USG concerns regarding growing ties between Venezuela and Iran. Leon said Spain had deep concerns regarding the overall direction of events in Venezuela (with which Spain expects a more difficult and strained relationship over the next months) and had specifically cautioned Caracas regarding its links to Iran. On Russian President Putin's comments on the CFE Treaty and Russia's position on missile defense, Leon expressed support for USG positions. Leon praised the role of DNSA Elliot Abrams in pressing forward on the Western Sahara issue, saying he believed the Polisario may be prepared to negotiate but that the USG and others would likely have to work Algeria further to bring them on board. Lastly, Leon discussed his role in leading Spain's diplomatic engagement with African nations to stem the flow of illegal immigration to the Canary Islands. End Summary.

//VISIT TO SPAIN OF SECRETARY RICE//

12. (C) Regarding the anticipated June 1 visit to Madrid by the Secretary, Leon said that Spain was focused on laying the groundwork for an effective and successful visit. He said that the Zapatero Government did not want the visit to be manipulated "by either side" and hinted that the USG could urge the opposition Popular Party to avoid making the visit a partisan event. The Charge said that the USG had worked with both the PP and the PSOE for some time to keep Spanish relations with the USG from being used for partisan purposes, but that we could not control how any party in Spain would respond to the Secretary's presence in Spain. Leon and the Charge discussed possible agenda items for the Secretary's bilateral meetings in Spain.

//IRAQ//

13. (C) Charge thanked Leon for Spain's pledge of \$28 million for Iraqi reconstruction at the last meeting at Sharm-el-Sheik. He said Spain's support for stability in Iraq and support for the International Compact with Iraq was an important signal of Spain's support for democracy and stability. Leon said that, whatever differences between the U.S. and Spain on Iraq, Spain did not want the U.S. to fail in Iraq. He emphasized Spain's support for the Compact as part of its overall policy of promoting regional stability.

//KOSOVO//

14. (C) Charge relayed REF A points, underscoring USG support for the Ahtissari Plan, which includes Kosovo independence and finally provides a vehicle for a comprehensive resolution of the issue. In this context, Spain's presence in Kosovo was critical. Leon said that Spain was a disciplined supporter of the EU position on Kosovo and would continue to promote a UN-led resolution of the issue. However, Leon said

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that if there was no UNSC resolution supporting the Ahtissari Plan, and Kosovo unilaterally declared independence, it would be highly likely that Spain would withdraw its forces from Kosovo. Spain understands that Kosovo is a special case, given Serbia's history of ethnic cleansing, and that this special history separated it from Spain's own problems with national minorities, such as the Basques. But, if the Kosovo issue were to be mishandled, it could have a domestic impact for Spain, with some minority nationalist groups claiming the Kosovo example as a pathway to greater independence. Leon urged a deliberate approach on the UN resolution, saying the Russians were posturing and "gaming" supporters of the Ahtissari Plan, but could be brought around eventually. "We would prefer a quick resolution of the matter, but it's more important to have a plan that is acceptable to all parties than to rush through a plan that is unacceptable to one of the major parties." Leon ventured that the formation of the new Serbian Government constituted a positive development.

//IRAN-VENEZUELA LINKS//

14. (C) Charge discussed the USG's concerns regarding the deepening relationship between Venezuela and Iran (REF B), which undermines both our effort to strengthen regional capacity to fight transnational crime and our broader effort to compel Iran to comply with UNSC resolutions on its nuclear program. Leon said that Spain was concerned with developments in Venezuela at virtually every level. He said Spain expected its relationship with Venezuela to enter into a difficult period in the near future, since Spain was shifting its approach from emphasizing engagement with the Chavez Government (which Leon acknowledged had provided access to Chavez, but nothing more) to an approach in which the new Spanish Ambassador would be laying down markers for the Venezuelan authorities. On Venezuelan-Iranian relations, Leon said that Spanish officials had raised this issue with Caracas, asking the Venezuelan authorities how closer relations with Iran would diminish the alleged USG security

threat against Venezuela. The Venezuelans "did not listen at all" to Spain's concerns. Leon said that the Spanish Government had also raised the RCTV closure with senior Venezuelan officials, and failed to make headway on this issue as well. The Charge urged Spain to voice its concerns regarding the direction of events in Venezuela.

//RUSSIA, CFE, MISSILE DEFENSE//

15. (C) On Russia, Charge expressed concern regarding Putin's April 26 remarks on the CFE treaty and the USG's puzzlement with Russia's suggestion that NATO is not fulfilling its obligations under the CFE (REF C). He also underscored the importance of the Allies standing together and delivering the message, publicly and privately, that the Alliance remains fully committed to NATO compliance with the CFE. Charge noted that the USG does not accept Russian linkage of disagreements over the CFE and U.S. and NATO missile defense plans (REF D). Leon agreed on the need to present a united front on the CFE issue. On missile defense, Leon said that Spain would not take a leading role in addressing the issue, but would work within NATO in support of the U.S. position. He said Spain understood that the USG had acted appropriately to advise Russia of USG plans related to missile defense.

//WESTERN SAHARA//

16. (C) Turning to the Western Sahara, Charge told Leon that it was essential to maintain the momentum in the aftermath of the successful UNSC resolution on the extension of Minurso. Leon agreed and said that the GOS remained extremely pleased and gratified by the level of U.S. policy interest in the issue. He said it was a great example of positive U.S. foreign policy engagement, and he praised the leadership of DNSA Abrams. He said that the Spanish are committed to working with Special Envoy van Walsum to get negotiations moving under UN auspices. He noted that the U.S. is perhaps

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more eager than Spain to move the process quickly, but he said that there is a good chance to achieve a solution to the Western Sahara issue this time. He stated his belief that the Polisario are genuinely ready to negotiate at last, and he added that Algeria would remain the wild card in forging a successful negotiated settlement. Leon told DCM that the U.S. should use its influence with Bouteflika to press Algeria to work constructively to settle the question. He suggested that in Spain's view the U.S. has increased leverage over Algeria, more than any other member of the Group of Friends.

//LEON MANAGING IMMIGRATION ISSUES//

17. (C) Leon regretted the brevity of his meeting with the Charge, as he had to leave immediately after for a trip to Senegal to work on countering the ongoing illegal migration flows from West Africa to the Canary Islands. He confided to the Charge that he had been handed this relatively hopeless portfolio and was frustrated both by his inability to gain traction with West African governments and by the EU's unwillingness to take serious collective action on the crisis. He said that West African ministers seemed genuinely interested in addressing their population and economic difficulties but were hamstrung by a lack of capacity. With respect to the consistent flow of migrants to the Canary Islands, he speculated that this could become increasingly problematic for Spain and the EU.

LLORENS